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How to Prevent Dreaded Wintertime Emergencies



By Aaron Kirk Douglas

In our recent interview with Kennedy Restorations co-owner Larry Goldade and marketing director Tysen Bodewig, we dug into a topic owners don't love to think about but absolutely must: Winterization.

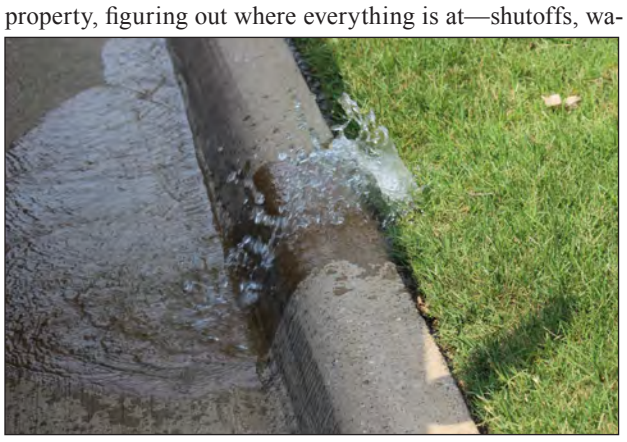
If you've ever watched 6 inches of water pour from a broken sprinkler riser, or seen a garden-style property turn into a sheet of ice because no one could find the shutoff valve, you know winter events aren't small inconveniences. They're operational, financial, and sometimes legal emergencies.

Bodewig and Goldade have seen decades of freeze cycles in the Pacific Northwest, and their message to owners is clear: The difference between a disaster and a near-miss is almost always preparation.

Start Early

Owners often want a checklist. What does "winterizing a multifamily property" actually mean?

Goldade didn't hesitate: "Right now, I'd be walking the property, figuring out where everything is at—shutoffs, water keys, and who handles what."



Too often, properties enter winter with:

- New staff who don't know where the valves are
- No documented emergency plan
- No one assigned to act during off-hours
- No clarity about who can authorize expenditures

The lack of planning creates panic when something breaks. As Goldade put it, "They hit panic mode, and then they start struggling. . . who makes the decisions on what, where, and for whom?" The remedy is simple: Walk, document, label, and train before the first freeze.

Where Buildings Fail First: Sprinkler Lines, Stairwells, Attics

Newer buildings are better insulated—but ironically, new construction is where most catastrophic freeze failures now occur. Bodewig explained why: "Most new buildings have sprinkler fire-suppression systems in areas that aren't heated. When the wind blows cold air into these cavities, that's when you get the break and the freeze." Owners often assume their biggest freeze risks are old domestic water lines. Actually, the highest-impact failures are sprinkler mains. And when they rupture, the damage is catastrophic:

A broken ½-inch pipe releases gallons per minute.

A broken 6-inch sprinkler line releases gallons per second.

"It's a whole different level of problem," Bodewig warned.

The Fix: Keep Air Moving—and Keep It Warm

In freeze conditions, the Kennedy team often recommends:

- Opening ceiling tiles to circulate warm air
- Pumping heated air into stairwells and breezeways
- Identifying all sprinkler lines close to exterior walls
- Adding insulation where feasible

It isn't glamorous work. But it prevents million-dollar losses.

Preventative Assessments: The "Know Your Building" Audit

When asked what owners should evaluate before winter, both men answered the same way: "Everything."

Bodewig described Kennedy's approach: "You've got to look at every aspect—attics, airflow, mold, ventilation, electrical, plumbing, fire suppression. You never know which subcontractor you're going to need."

They also recommended completing asbestos and lead-based paint surveys in advance. It's not glamorous, but when an emergency happens, waiting three days for lab results

See EMERGENCIES on Page 8

LA Supervisors to Consider Pet-Inclusive Housing Ordinance with Critical Housing Stability Implications

By The Pet Inclusive Housing Initiative

As Los Angeles braces for rising eviction pressure this winter and the potential loss of federal housing funds that could push thousands back into homelessness, county leaders are moving toward a decision that has major implications for housing stability in 2026.

In the first quarter of 2026, the L.A. County Board of Supervisors is expected to consider a pet-inclusive housing ordinance, following the 2025 release of a county feasibility study.

At a moment when more than 14,500 formerly homeless households are at risk of displacement, expanding housing access for renters who have pets is a critical part of the solution.

Pets are a major, overlooked factor of housing instability. Although most rentals claim to allow pets, restrictive breed and weight limits and excessive fees frequently force renters into impossible choices. Los Angeles ranks among the worst major cities for pet-inclusive housing access, with just 64% of properties allowing pets, and only 5% without breed and weight restrictions.

Michelson Center for Public Policy is working with county leaders to ensure the ordinance reflects real-world housing providers' concerns while providing pet-owning renters with options beyond losing their housing or surrendering their pets to LA's already overcrowded shelters.

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Seattle Rents Drop 1.6% in December

Rental Housing Journal

The median rent in Seattle fell by 1.6% over the course of December, but has increased by 2.0% over the past 12 months, according to the January report from Apartment List.

The overall median rent in the city stands at $2,047.

Twelve months into 2025, rents in Seattle had risen 2.0%. This is a similar rate of growth compared to what the city was experiencing the previous year, as from January to December 2024 rents had increased 1.8%.

The median rent currently is $1,910 for a 1-bedroom apartment and $2,384 for a 2-bedroom. Across all bedroom sizes the median rent is $2,047. That ranks 15th in the nation, among the country's 100 largest cities.

Across the Seattle metro area, the median rent is $1,964, meaning that the median price in Seattle proper ($2,047) is 4.2% greater than the price across the metro as a whole. Metro-wide annual rent growth stands at 1.0%, below the rate of rent growth within just the city.

The table shows the latest rent stats for 19 cities in the Seattle metro area that are included in the Apartment List's tracking. Among them, Issaquah is currently the most expensive, with a median rent of $2,541. Lakewood is the metro's most affordable city, with a median rent of $1,491. The metro's fastest annual rent growth is occurring in Lakewood (8.2%) while the slowest is in Kirkland (-1.9%).



City	Median 1BR Rent	Median 2BR Rent	M/M Rent Growth	Y/Y Rent Growth
Auburn	$1,298	$1,598	-0.6%	-1.0%
Bellevue	$2,065	$2,395	-1.3%	-1.3%
Bothell	$1,973	$2,338	-0.4%	-0.9%
Everett	$1,443	$1,668	-0.4%	-0.7%
Federal Way	$1,412	$1,787	-1.2%	-1.0%
Issaquah	$2,137	$2,516	-3.2%	0.8%
Kent	$1,400	$1,729	-1.1%	-0.5%
Kirkland	$2,021	$2,385	-1.7%	-1.9%
Lakewood	$1,310	$1,585	1.2%	8.2%
Lynnwood	$1,479	$1,773	-0.1%	0.1%
Mountlake Terrace	$1,855	$1,999	0.5%	-0.7%
Newcastle	$2,085	$2,226	-3.1%	0.7%
Puyallup	$1,610	$1,842	-0.6%	2.4%
Redmond	$2,013	$2,265	-1.3%	-0.1%
Renton	$1,740	$2,076	-1.5%	-0.9%
Seattle	$1,910	$2,384	-1.6%	2.0%
Shoreline	$1,625	$2,034	-0.1%	-0.7%
Tacoma	$1,417	$1,771	-0.7%	2.1%
Woodinville	$2,104	$2,895	0.2%	-1.5%



Why Feedback is Important for Leasing, Living and Renewals

By Carla J. Alicea

Every transformation begins with a few voices. In the multifamily industry, that voice belongs to a community's residents, and it's important to listen at the right moments. Resident surveys have evolved dramatically, going beyond the "set it and forget it" mindset to a more dynamic ecosystem. The long-standing annual survey is no longer sufficient to support the resident experience.

Think of timing resident feedback like you would a conversation in a new relationship. It's not healthy to wait an entire year to make sure everything is going well. For the relationship to thrive, it needs regular check-ins. This is the same approach that multifamily needs to take with its residents. Creating genuine connections drives satisfaction and retention.

Pulse and Moment-Based Surveys Are Must-Have Additions

Annual surveys remain essential for benchmarking and serve as the north star for understanding a community's overall health. They're valuable for comparative data and long-term trend analysis. However, these surveys are like a photograph, and communities need a system that's more like a live feed.

This is where shorter, targeted "pulse" and "moment-based" surveys are essential. These frequent check-ins capture feedback when experiences are fresh and emotions are authentic. They serve as strategic touchpoints that help communities stay ahead of emerging trends and issues, rather than discovering problems months after they've taken root. Pulse surveys are periodic "health" checks on resident sentiment. Moment-based surveys are triggered during specific events along the renter journey, such as move-in or renewal.

The move-in experience is a good example of the effectiveness of moment-based surveys. A resident's first 30 days can shape their entire relationship with the community. Waiting for an annual survey to gather insights into their onboarding experience means missing the opportunity to set the tone for long-term success, celebrate wins or address issues. Some of the most important moments for surveys include move-in, maintenance, renewal and move-out. Communities may also want to introduce pulse surveys between their annuals to check in on trend directions, as well as send out ad hoc surveys after making meaningful operational changes, such as the introduction of a new policy or proposed amenity.

The Shift from Reactive to Proactive

Almost all property managers have experienced the pain of discovering a maintenance issue through an angry, one-star review or learning about a policy issue via a non-renewal notice. Real-time feedback enables onsite teams to act quickly, improving resident satisfaction before it declines.

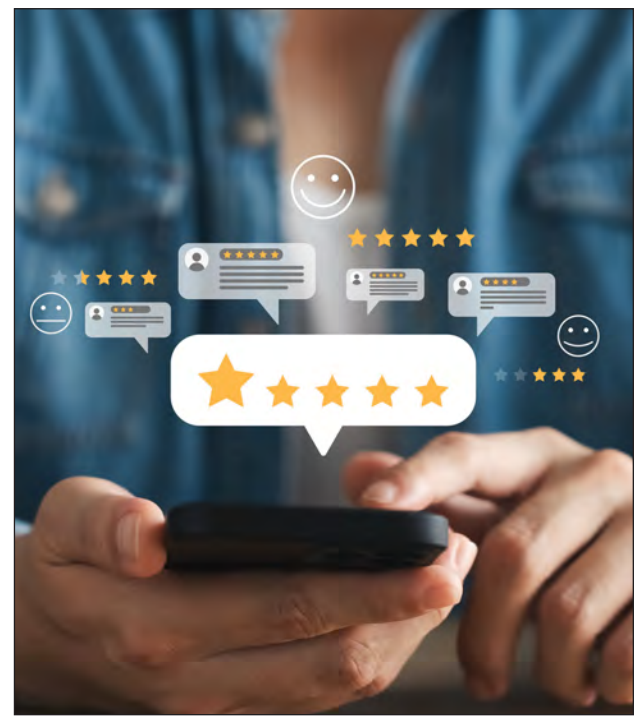
A proactive approach transforms teams from firefighters to architects of exceptional resident experiences. Catching feedback at critical moments—after a maintenance request, after amenity use, or during renewal discussions—gives teams the power to address concerns while they're still manageable, or to gauge what's working well.

The beauty of this moment-based feedback lies in its specificity and timeliness. Instead of asking a resident to recall a maintenance experience from six months prior, teams can capture their thoughts within days. In addition, human memory is notoriously unreliable, especially over time. The proactive immediacy of pulse surveys gives more accurate data and more actionable insights.

Turning Data Into Direction

When survey insights are unified across touchpoints, like maintenance response times or renewal likelihood, property managers gain a 360° view of resident experience and can connect feedback directly to measurable outcomes.

This connectivity in data streams reveals powerful correlations that drive strategic, data-based decision-making. For example, at move-in, "Value for Amount Paid" is one of the strongest levers behind overall satisfaction. When heading into renewal, "Management's ability to resolve problems" becomes the make-or-break driver.



From there, trend reporting adds context over time, helping teams spot shifts early and make proactive adjustments before minor issues grow into major problems. Frequent analysis can also bring to the surface patterns that might otherwise go unnoticed, like seasonal fluctuations in satisfaction or how new policies influence resident sentiment.

Advanced analytics, including AI-powered analysis of open-ended responses, can uncover themes that traditional metrics might miss. If residents mention communication, AI can assess whether they are praising a team's responsiveness or expressing frustration with it.

Building Long-Term Trust

Regular communication through surveys not only solves today's problems but also shows residents that their voices shape the community's future. The ongoing dialogue builds something that's invaluable—trust.

This develops when residents see their feedback translated into action. Trust grows when teams communicate changes transparently, acknowledging both successes and areas for improvement.

See FEEDBACK on Page 6





Weak Finish Erodes 2025 Gains for Rents

Rental Housing Journal

U.S. advertised rents slipped again in December, producing the weakest quarter in years and wiping out gains made during the first half of 2025, Yardi Matrix says in its year-end report.

Multifamily rents pretty much ended the year where they started with the weak finish to 2025.

Regional disparities that defined recent years persisted through 2025. Rent growth remained concentrated in coastal markets and the Midwest, while the weakest performance was largely confined to the Sun Belt, where elevated new supply continues to weigh on pricing.

That is not stopping investors from increasing transaction volume and paying up for multifamily properties. Demand is strong, but counteracted by pricing uncertainty. High-growth secondary markets led by Dallas, Seattle and Phoenix attracted the most investor dollars in 2025.

Highlights of the report:



2025 ended on a down note for multifamily, as a weak finish to 2025 late-year performance wiped out all the gains from earlier in the year. The average U.S. advertised rent fell $5 to $1,737 in December, with year-over-year growth dropping 20 basis points to 0.0%.

Years without growth are rare. The last one with no average national advertised rent recorded was the 2020 pandemic year. Before that, the last one without a national rent increase was the recovery from the global financial crisis in 2010. We expect modest increases in 2026.

Single-family build-to-rent units are maintaining strong occupancy, but advertised rates are weakening as well. The average BTR advertised rent declined by $4 in December to $2,180, while the year-over-year growth rate fell to -1.0%.

"Fourth-quarter performance marked the weakest showing since the global financial crisis, raising concerns about near-term multifamily demand," the report says.

"Looking ahead, despite ongoing economic uncertainty, stronger GDP growth in the fourth quarter points to improving momentum. Greater stability in 2026 could help lift consumer confidence and support a gradual rebound in rental demand."

Read the full report at:
https://www.yardimatrix.com/Publications

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FEEDBACK

It flourishes when residents feel heard, valued, and respected as partners in creating a thriving, exceptional community.

Owners and operators may want to implement a "You Asked, We Listened" communication strategy across their portfolios, and onsite teams should regularly share how resident feedback influenced improvements.

This transparency demonstrates a commitment to continuous enhancement and encourages ongoing feedback in a survey ecosystem.

Other Critical Factors of Pulse Surveys

The above covers the benefits of implementing a system of pulse or moment-based survey, but there are other factors that need consideration for a successful system of feedback:

- **Response Rates** - Reliable data typically comes from response rates of 10%-20% for resident surveys and 7%-10% for prospect surveys. Shorter surveys don't automatically yield better response rates. This is less about survey design and more about creating a culture where feedback is encouraged and truly matters. Communities can improve their response through effective promotion and consistent communication.
- **Psychological Safety** - Residents need to feel confident that their honest feedback won't result in any negative consequences. This means that onsite teams need training in responding to criticism with gratitude rather than taking a defensive stance. They should always demonstrate that residents' input drives action and positive change.
- **Sentiment Influences Metrics** - Always remember that the correlation between resident sentiment and operational metrics is undeniable. Timely and personable communication significantly impacts renewal, referrals and reputation. Open lines of communication and responsiveness to feedback foster a sense of belonging among residents.

Multifamily can continue with traditional approaches that provide limited insights, or it can embrace a system that transforms how communities understand and serve residents.

Owners and operators can improve leasing, the resident experience, and renewals by listening with greater intention, responding more quickly and acting more decisively based on data. Residents are ready to share their experiences—is multifamily ready to listen?

Carla J. Alicea is a customer-focused research and analytics professional with nearly 30 years of multifamily industry experience, specializing in resident and employee insights. Her work focuses on how perceptions and behaviors across both audiences shape trust, satisfaction, and performance. She is senior product manager, research and analytics, at Grace Hill. Grace Hill provides technology-enabled performance solutions that help owners and operators of real estate properties increase property performance, reduce operating risk and grow top talent.

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A Welcome Freeze for Landlords: Credit

By Scot Aubrey



With winter in full swing in parts of the country, many of us are all too familiar with freezing temperatures. While this can make it tough to be a landlord, there's a freeze that each of us should be familiar with, and taking advantage of, beginning immediately. I'm talking about a credit freeze. It's not just something that consumers need to worry about; for landlords, it can be one of the smartest (and easiest) defenses you can put in place.

As an investor and someone who relies on their rental business, your personal credit is often inseparable from your ability to operate. Financing, insurance rates, even your ability to expand your portfolio, all rely on your credit. In today's environment—where identity theft, data breaches, and sophisticated fraud are increasingly common—placing a credit freeze should be viewed as a business continuity step, not just a personal precaution.

Landlords are Prime Targets

As a landlord you manage high-value assets and frequently share sensitive information across multiple services: mortgage lenders, banks, tenant screening platforms, maintenance vendors, online payment portals, and property management software. Each interaction creates another potential point of exposure. Even if you run a small portfolio, your data circulates far beyond what you realize. And because most landlords have stable credit histories, you are especially attractive to fraudsters who want to exploit your good credit to open new accounts, take out loans, or rack up debt in your name.

You Must be Operational

It's easy to assume that identity theft is just a nuisance, but for you as a landlord, the consequences can be far more damaging and disruptive. A fraudulent loan or credit line can damage your credit score and trigger higher interest rates or reduced borrowing power right when you need it—such as refinancing a property, funding repairs, or purchasing another unit. Worse yet, you might not discover the fraud until applying for financing, at which point the timing can be catastrophic.

A credit freeze blocks lenders from pulling your credit file unless you temporarily lift the freeze. This translates to criminals being unable to open new lines of credit in your name, even if they have your Social Security number and other details. You'll still be able to use existing credit cards and accounts normally, but you'll reduce the risk of new account fraud, which is the most damaging kind.

Freezing Your Credit is Free, Fast, and Reversible

A major reason landlords haven't adopted credit freezes more widely is outdated assumptions. Many people still believe credit freezes are expensive, complicated, or hard to undo. In reality, U.S. law requires the credit bureaus to offer them for free, and most freezes can be placed online in minutes. If you need to apply for a mortgage, open a new credit card, or finance a renovation, you can temporarily lift the freeze for a set time window and then re-freeze it once the transaction is complete.

As an investor, I suggest that you do these THREE things immediately:

1. **Put a freeze on your credit**. Experian has made it easy to freeze and unfreeze. Create your freeze today at: https://www.experian.com/freeze/center.html
2. **Use an online rent-payment system to manage your rental payments.** These systems allow rent to be paid from bank account to bank account, without giving out your personal bank account numbers to your tenants. This will protect you from one more person having your personal information.
3. **Watch what you post online.** When you search for your name, what do you see? I personally write many articles, do podcasts, record videos, and have my information everywhere, so people know me. Your social media is also the perfect medium for people to grab pictures or personal information. If you find yourself with a growing online presence or increased exposure, go back to No. 1 above and make sure you freeze your credit. You don't want to be one of those 6,000 daily reports of fraud going to the FTC.

Professional Level Protection

Landlords often invest in security systems, smoke detectors, liability insurance, and legal protections for leases. Freezing your credit belongs in that same category: a foundational safeguard. It's not about paranoia—it's about recognizing that your identity is an asset, and like any asset, it deserves protection. Taking 15 minutes today to freeze your credit can save you months of headaches later—and help ensure your rental business remains stable, scalable, and secure.

Scot Aubrey is vice president of Rent Perfect, a private investigator, fellow landlord and cohost of the Rent Perfect Podcast. Subscribe to the weekly to stay up to date on the latest industry news and for expert tips on how to manage your properties.

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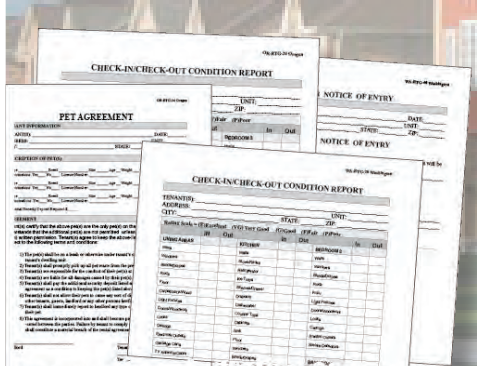
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Maintenance Tips and Management Guidance from Down in the Trenches





'Landlord Hank' Rossi offers helpful, useful information for fellow rental property owners and managers

Read his column and ask him your own questions in Rental Housing Journal — in print or online

FROM PAGE 1

EMERGENCIES

costs money, occupancy days, and additional damage.

"Secondary damage actually does more damage than the first run," Goldade noted. It's what sits wet for days that becomes the bigger issue."

Most Common Owner Mistakes

Asked about the biggest mistakes owners make when preparing for winter, Goldade laughed: "They roll the dice a lot. They gamble on, 'Is it going to be cold?' "

Oregon encourages this kind of magical thinking.

It snows, and it melts the next day. Until it doesn't.

Goldade offered a vivid example of a property that does everything right: "Anytime it gets below freezing, they put ice melt on the walkways… They are jumping ahead of the curve."

Owners who take winter seriously don't just avoid emergencies; they avoid liability, tenant injuries, and long-term insurance consequences.

Insurance: More Complicated, More Expensive—And More Important Than Ever

With rising premiums and dramatic increases in deductibles, many owners are deciding whether to self-insure minor incidents.

Kennedy sees this every week.

Goldade explained that owners sometimes prohibit the restoration firm from speaking directly with the insurance adjuster—an efficiency killer.

"If they would talk to us and let us explain why we're doing what we're doing, it goes much smoother. Most insurance adjusters have never built a house in their lives."

The mismatch of expertise can delay approvals, slow work, and increase loss.

Kennedy's team prefers to speak directly to the carrier because they already know what documentation, moisture readings, itemization, and photographs insurers require.

Bodewig added another operational headache: "If a resident shuts off a drying machine because it's 'too loud,' it causes more secondary damage and slows everything."

This is why trained technicians—and clear communication protocols—matter.

Are Owners Filing Fewer Claims? Yes. And It's Changing the Industry

With insurance costs skyrocketing, more owners are choosing to handle minor losses themselves.

"We're seeing companies buy their own equipment—fans, dehumidifiers, moisture meters—to handle small water losses," Goldade said.

But he warned that this only works for very small incidents.

When a loss spreads across multiple floors, a professional must be called in. And when they are, the single most important question is whether the owner intends to make an insurance claim—everything about the restoration process changes based on that decision.

"The faster they know what they want, the easier it is to stop costing them more money," Bodewig emphasized.

What To Do When a Winter Emergency Hits

If there was one part of the conversation every owner should memorize, it's what should happen when those 9:00 p.m. Friday emergency calls come in. Goldade described it plainly:

- Call the restoration firm immediately.
- They arrive and stabilize the situation—minimizing disturbance to tenants when possible.
- They perform moisture and air testing.
- They determine whether evidence must be preserved for subrogation. ("We might have to lock up a water heater in our facility so investigators can inspect it.")
- The owner decides—quickly—whether this is an insurance claim.
- The restoration work proceeds with proper documentation.

The longer the delay, the higher the cost. Not just in dollars, but in lost rent, tenant displacement, and preventable secondary damage.

The Takeaway for Multifamily Owners and Investors

If winterization had a slogan, it would be this: Preparation is cheap. Winter emergencies are not. So, in short:

- Know your buildings.
- Know your shutoffs.
- Know your policies.
- Know who's authorized to call for help.

And, if you do need help, know that firms like Kennedy Restoration have seen every version of winter disaster—and know how to get buildings livable again fast.

As I listened to Bodewig and Goldade, one thought stayed with me: Winter isn't the real threat. Unpreparedness is.

Kennedy Restoration specializes in restoring multifamily properties damaged by fire, water, wind, vandalism, and other natural and manmade disasters. They can be reached 24/7 at (503) 234-0509 or www.kennedyres.com.



Aaron Kirk Douglas is a multifaceted storyteller and market analyst. His career spans journalism, creative nonfiction, filmmaking, and real estate research. He serves as Director of Market Intelligence at HFO Investment Real Estate/GREA, the Pacific Northwest's leading multifamily brokerage.

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